

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2606

To require an unclassified interagency report on the political influence operations of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party with respect to the United States, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 4, 2021

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## A BILL

To require an unclassified interagency report on the political influence operations of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party with respect to the United States, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-  
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Countering the Chinese  
5 Government and Communist Party’s Political Influence  
6 Operations Act”.

1   **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2       In this Act:

3           (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-  
4           TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-  
5           mittees” means—

6              (A) the Committee on Appropriations of  
7              the Senate;

8              (B) the Committee on Armed Services of  
9              the Senate;

10             (C) the Committee on Foreign Relations of  
11              the Senate;

12             (D) the Committee on Health, Education,  
13              Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

14             (E) the Committee on the Judiciary of the  
15              Senate;

16             (F) the Select Committee on Intelligence of  
17              the Senate;

18             (G) the Committee on Banking, Housing,  
19              and Urban Affairs of the Senate;

20             (H) the Committee on Appropriations of  
21              the House of Representatives;

22             (I) the Committee on Armed Services of  
23              the House of Representatives;

24             (J) the Committee on Education and  
25              Labor of the House of Representatives;

(K) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives;

(L) the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives;

(M) the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence of the House of Representatives;

and

(N) the Committee on Financial Services  
of the House of Representatives.

## (2) POLITICAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS.—The

term “political influence operations” means the co-ordinated and often concealed application of disinformation, press manipulation, economic coercion, targeted investments, corruption, or academic censorship, which are often intended—

(A) to coerce and corrupt United States interests, values, institutions, or individuals; and

(B) to foster attitudes, behavior, decisions, or outcomes in the United States that support the interests of the Government of the People's Republic of China or the Chinese Communist Party.

### **23 SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

24 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

1                             (1) The Government of the People's Republic of  
2                             China and the Chinese Communist Party employ a  
3                             wide range of political, informational, and economic  
4                             measures to influence, coerce, intimidate, and under-  
5                             mine the United States interests and the interests of  
6                             United States partners and allies.

7                             (2) The December 2017 National Security  
8                             Strategy of the United States of America states,  
9                             “Although the United States seeks to continue to co-  
10                             operate with China, China is using economic induce-  
11                             ments and penalties, influence operations, and im-  
12                             plied military threats to persuade other states to  
13                             heed its political and security agenda.”

14                             (3) Given the economic strength of the People's  
15                             Republic of China and the growing apparatus being  
16                             used to spread its influence globally, efforts to pro-  
17                             mote its authoritarian ideal pose significant and con-  
18                             sequential long-term challenges to United States in-  
19                             terests and values.

20                             (4) The Government of the People's Republic of  
21                             China and the Chinese Communist Party use overt  
22                             and covert means to target the political and eco-  
23                             nomic elite, the media and public opinion, civil soci-  
24                             ety and academia, and members of the Chinese dias-  
25                             pora.

1                             (5) The Government of the People’s Republic of  
2 China and the Chinese Communist Party employ an  
3 array of government entities, friendship and ex-  
4 change organizations, private entities and  
5 businesspeople, and government-funded foundations,  
6 think tanks, educational and other projects to carry  
7 out political influence operations, which is often re-  
8 ferred to as “United Front work.”

9                             (6) According to the U.S.-China Economic and  
10 Security Review Commission, “China uses what it  
11 calls ‘United Front’ work to co-opt and neutralize  
12 sources of potential opposition to the policies and  
13 authority of its ruling Chinese Communist Party. . .  
14 To carry out its influence activities abroad, the  
15 [United Front Work Department] directs ‘overseas  
16 Chinese work,’ which seeks to co-opt ethnic Chinese  
17 individuals and communities living outside China,  
18 while a number of other key affiliated organizations  
19 guided by China’s broader United Front strategy  
20 conduct influence operations targeting foreign actors  
21 and states.”

22                             (7) These political influence operations violate  
23 national sovereignty, and as such, are fundamentally  
24 different from traditional efforts by countries to  
25 shape international policy debates and improve their

1       public image through public diplomacy and strategic  
2       communications campaigns.

3               (8) The aims of the political influence oper-  
4       ations of the Government of the People's Republic of  
5       China and the Chinese Communist Party are—

6                       (A) to protect the political security of the  
7       Chinese Communist Party, or its ability to exer-  
8       cise an absolute monopoly on political power  
9       within the People's Republic of China and to in-  
10      creasingly to dominate international politics re-  
11      garding issues that the Chinese Communist  
12      Party deems important;

13                       (B) to domestically and globally promote  
14      the idea that the Chinese Communist Party's  
15      political and economic model is superior to that  
16      of democracies;

17                       (C) to spread its governance model to  
18      other countries and to undermine democracy  
19      and free-market economies;

20                       (D) to promote the interests of the regime  
21      globally;

22                       (E) to weaken American alliances and  
23      partnerships by creating new divisions between  
24      them, or by exacerbating existing ones; and

(F) to foment domestic social and political divisions, and to exacerbate existing ones, within democratic countries, including by undermining popular confidence in democracy and its essential institutions.

6                             (9) The political influence operations of the  
7                             Government of the People's Republic of China and  
8                             the Chinese Communist Party take advantage of the  
9                             open and democratic nature of the United States, in-  
10                          cluding—

(A) constitutional protections for free speech and a free press; and

(B) the desire of some companies or institutions to attract Chinese investment, gain access to Chinese markets, or attain greater global influence.

17           (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
18 gress that—

19 (1) the political influence operations of the Gov-  
20 ernment of the People’s Republic of China and the  
21 Chinese Communist Party are not “soft power” in-  
22 tended to persuade, but “sharp power” intended—

23 (A) to penetrate or corrupt democratic  
24 countries and undermine democratic institu-  
25 tions and freedoms;

(B) to foster attitudes, behavior, laws, and policies favorable to the Government of the People's Republic of China's interest through disinformation, coercion, corruption, and other means;

(C) to widen the scope of Chinese authoritarian influence around the world, including—

(i) to suppress political opposition to the Chinese Communist Party; and

(ii) to violate the internationally rec-

ognized human and civil rights of both Chinese and foreign citizens living in countries around the world; and

(D) to undermine the strength of American  
nies around the world; and

(2) the people of the United States need reliable current information—

(A) to identify the key institutions, individuals, entities, and ministries that carry out such operations; and

(B) to distinguish between malign political influence operations intended to undermine core American freedoms and democratic institutions, as opposed to legitimate cultural, educational,

1           business, and people-to-people exchanges that  
2           may benefit the United States and China.

3         (c) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the  
4         United States—

5           (1) to clearly differentiate between the Chinese  
6         people and culture and the Government of the Peo-  
7         ple's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist  
8         Party in official statements, media messaging, and  
9         policy;

10          (2) to clearly differentiate between legal, inter-  
11         nationally accepted public diplomacy and strategic  
12         communications campaigns and illicit activities to  
13         undermine democratic institutions or freedoms;

14          (3) to protect United States citizens and legal  
15         residents from malign or coercive political influence  
16         operations;

17          (4) to enhance cooperation and coordination  
18         with the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New  
19         Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and the mem-  
20         bers of the European Union, whose governments and  
21         institutions have faced acute pressure from the polit-  
22         ical influence operations of the Government of the  
23         People's Republic of China and the Chinese Com-  
24         munist Party, and with other allies throughout the  
25         world;

1                         (5) to create strategies to ensure that countries  
2     in Africa, the Western Hemisphere, Southeast Asia,  
3     and elsewhere are aware of the People’s Republic of  
4     China’s “sharp power” tactics, including the Chinese  
5     Communist Party’s party-to-party training program,  
6     which is designed to instill admiration and emulation  
7     of Beijing’s governance model and weaken democ-  
8     racy in these regions, and provide needed capacity to  
9     counter them effectively;

10                       (6) to implement more advanced transparency  
11     requirements concerning collaboration with Chinese  
12     actors for media agencies, universities, think tanks,  
13     and government officials;

14                       (7) to use various forums to raise awareness  
15     about—

16                       (A) the goals and methods of the political  
17     influence operations of the Government of the  
18     People’s Republic of China and the Chinese  
19     Communist Party; and

20                       (B) common patterns and approaches used  
21     by Chinese intelligence agencies or related ac-  
22     tors;

23                       (8) to require greater transparency for Confu-  
24     cius Institutes, think tanks, academic programs, and  
25     nongovernmental organizations funded primarily by

1       the Government of the People's Republic of China  
2       and the Chinese Communist Party, or by individuals  
3       or public or private organizations with a demon-  
4       strable affiliation with the Government of the Peo-  
5       ple's Republic of China and the Chinese Communist  
6       Party that are operating in the United States to reg-  
7       ister through the Foreign Agents Registration Act of  
8       1938 (22 U.S.C. 611 et seq.) or a comparable mech-  
9       anism;

10              (9) to seek ways to increase Chinese language  
11       proficiency among mid-career professionals that do  
12       not rely on funding linked to the Government of the  
13       People's Republic of China;

14              (10) to ensure that existing tools are suffi-  
15       ciently screening for the risk of Chinese influence  
16       operations; and

17              (11) to create more flexible tools, as needed,  
18       with the goals of—

19                  (A) screening investments from the Gov-  
20       ernment of the People's Republic of China or  
21       sources backed by such government to protect  
22       against the takeover of United States compa-  
23       nies by Chinese state-owned or state-driven en-  
24       ties; and

(B) protecting institutions or business sectors critically important to United States national security and the viability of democratic institutions.

**5 SEC. 4. STRATEGY TO COUNTER “SHARP POWER” POLIT-  
6  
ICAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS AND TO PRO-  
7  
TECT UNITED STATES CITIZENS.**

8       (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State and the  
9 Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with all  
10 relevant Federal agencies, shall develop a long-term strat-  
11 egy—

23 (4) to ensure that—

24 (A) the United States Government strategy  
25 to protect the communities described in para-

1           graph (3) is clearly communicated by relevant  
2           Federal officials; and

3               (B) secure outlets are created for reporting  
4               on intimidation and surveillance;

5               (5) to ensure that Chinese nationals who are le-  
6               gally studying, living, or working temporarily in the  
7               United States know that intimidation or surveillance  
8               by the Government of the People's Republic of  
9               China and the Chinese Communist Party is an unac-  
10              ceptable invasion of their rights while they reside in  
11              the United States;

12              (6) to provide secure outlets for reporting on in-  
13              timidation and surveillance; and

14              (7) to identify new tools or authorities nec-  
15              essary to implement this strategy.

16           (b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date  
17           of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the  
18           Secretary of State, or an appropriate high-ranking official,  
19           shall—

20              (1) submit an unclassified report, which may  
21              include a classified annex, containing the strategy  
22              required under subsection (a) to the appropriate  
23              congressional committees; or

24              (2) describe the strategy required under sub-  
25              section (a) through unclassified testimony before the

1 Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate or  
2 the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of  
3 Representatives.

**4 SEC. 5. REPORT ON THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OPER-**

**5 ATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA AND**

**6 THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA.**

7       (a) IN GENERAL.—Because it is important for  
8 United States policymakers and the American people to  
9 be informed about the influence operations described in  
10 section 3, not later than 270 days after the date of the  
11 enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Sec-  
12 retary of State, in coordination with the Director of Na-  
13 tional Intelligence, and in consultation with the heads of  
14 relevant Federal departments and agencies, shall submit  
15 an unclassified report, which may include a classified  
16 annex, to the appropriate congressional committees that  
17 describes the political influence operations of the Govern-  
18 ment of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese  
19 Communist Party affecting the United States and select  
20 allies and partners, including the United Kingdom, Can-  
21 ada, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and Japan, includ-  
22 ing efforts—

(1) to exert influence over United States governmental or nongovernmental institutions or individuals.

1       viduals, or government officials among United States  
2       allies and partners;

3               (2) to coerce or threaten United States citizens  
4       or legal permanent residents or their families and  
5       associates living in China or elsewhere;

6               (3) to undermine democratic institutions and  
7       the freedoms of speech, expression, the press, asso-  
8       ciation, assembly, religion, or academic thought;

9               (4) to otherwise suppress information in public  
10      fora, in the United States and abroad; or

11               (5) to develop or obtain property, facilities, in-  
12      frastructure, business entities, or other assets for  
13      use in facilitating the activities described in para-  
14      graphs (1) through (4).

15       (b) CONTENTS.—The report required under sub-  
16      section (a) shall include recommendations for the Presi-  
17      dent and Congress relating to—

18               (1) the need for additional resources or authori-  
19      ties to counter political influence operations in the  
20      United States directed by the Government of the  
21      People's Republic of China and the Chinese Com-  
22      munist Party, including operations carried out in  
23      concert with allies;

24               (2) whether a permanent office to monitor and  
25      respond to political influence operations of the Gov-

1 ernment of the People's Republic of China and the  
2 Chinese Communist Party should be established  
3 within the Department of State or within the Office  
4 of the Director of National Intelligence; and

5 (3) whether regular public reports on the polit-  
6 ical influence operations of the Government of the  
7 People's Republic of China and the Chinese Com-  
8 munist Party are needed to inform Congress and the  
9 American people of the scale and scope of such oper-  
10 ations.

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